

I sincerely hope that balanced, bipartisan bankruptcy reform will be completed this year, but I will not hesitate to veto unfair legislation that fails the test of balance.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives; Richard A. Gephardt, House minority leader; Trent Lott, Senate majority leader; and Thomas A. Daschle, Senate minority leader. An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

June 10, 2000

Good morning. As we enter the new century, opportunity is abundant. We're in the midst of the longest economic expansion in history, with 22 million new jobs and the lowest unemployment in 30 years. Yet we know some Americans are finding it harder and harder to balance the demands of work and family. People are working more jobs and longer hours than ever before, forcing many of them to make the unacceptable choice between being good workers and the best parents or caregivers.

Today I want to speak with you about important new steps we're taking to give working Americans the time off they need to care for their families without losing the income they need to support them.

According to a recent Federal study, parents in the average family now have 22 fewer hours per week to spend at home than they did just a generation ago. That's the loss of nearly a full day to spend time with their families. And the percentage of married mothers working outside the home has nearly doubled, from 38 to 68 percent, over the last three decades.

We also know that many of them are working weekends or on the night shift, times they've traditionally spent at home caring for their families. In our round-the-clock economy, there just doesn't seem to be enough hours during the day for working Americans to do everything they need to.

For more than 7 years now, our administration has taken action to give families the flexibility they need to balance the demands of work and home. We've helped make child care safer, better, and more affordable for millions of families. We've greatly expanded preschool and after-school programs. We fought to give generous tax credits to help the growing number of families who provide care for aging and ailing loved ones at home.

I'm especially proud that the very first bill I signed as President was the Family and Medical Leave Act. Since 1993, more than 20 million Americans have used it to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave to care for a newborn or sick relative without fear of losing their jobs. Still there are too many families that aren't making use of the law because they simply can't afford to take the time off if it means sacrificing a paycheck.

Today I'm announcing two new steps that will allow working Americans to take time off they need to care for their families without giving up the pay they need to support them.

First, I'm pleased to announce that States will soon have the option to use funds from their unemployment insurance programs to provide paid leave to new parents following the birth or adoption of a child. While this initiative is totally voluntary, there are already 15 States considering legislation to provide paid leave through unemployment insurance or other means. In fact, Massachusetts may vote on such a bill in the next few weeks.

In this strong economy, I hope more States will take advantage of this new option, and I believe those which do can provide this new benefit while still preserving the fiscal soundness of their unemployment insurance programs. The first few months with a newborn are precious ones, and no parent should have to miss them.

Second, we all know record numbers of Americans are providing for aging or ailing loved ones at home. It's a loving but potentially very expensive choice. That's why, beginning later this month, all Federal employees will be able to take up to 12 weeks paid sick leave that they've earned to nurse an ailing child or parent back to health. If every company in America followed this example,

half of all our workers would have this important benefit for their families.

There are further steps we should take right away to help more parents balance work and family. Again, I call on Congress to extend the benefits of family and medical leave to employees of smaller companies, so we can reach another 12 million American families. And I urge Congress to pass my comprehensive long-term care initiative, which includes a \$3,000 tax credit to meet the growing needs of the elderly and their families.

At the dawn of the last century, Theodore Roosevelt said, "The greatest prizes of life are those connected to the home." Today, more than a century later, our families still are our most valued treasures. That's why I think no American should ever have to choose between the job they need and the parent or child they love. The actions we take today will help to ensure that they won't have to make that choice.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 4:25 p.m. on June 9 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on June 10. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 9 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Commencement Address at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota

June 10, 2000

Thank you very much, President Lewis. It's nice to be around someone who is not term-limited. *[Laughter]* To the trustees and faculty members, including your longtime faculty member and now your United States Senator, Senator Paul Wellstone. It's nice to see you and Sheila. Thank you for being here, both of you.

I congratulate Bruno Nettel and George Dixon on their degrees, and I thank the Carleton community for making me welcome. I congratulate the student speakers, Katy and Sachin and Faisal. They were really, really, I thought, very good. I'm glad there was some break between when they spoke and when I had to speak. *[Laughter]* Maybe you won't remember how good they were,

and I'll be able to get through this. *[Laughter]*

I want to congratulate all the members of the class of 2000, your families, and your friends, and I thank you for giving me the opportunity to share this with you.

I've been hearing about Carleton for years. I have a staff member and adviser, Tom Freedman, who is here with me today, class of '85, and his college roommate, John Harris, who—he's on the other side in Washington. He writes for the Washington Post. They're both here, over here to the left. So there is life after college, and they have proved it.

And they told me about the motto, "You are part of Carleton, and Carleton is part of you." They also told me that Carleton is my kind of place, a school that celebrates diversity, a school whose students and faculty exemplify excellence without elitism, a school where the president of the college gets to sing like Elvis. *[Laughter]*

I'm also very proud that someone painted my portrait on the water tower, and I thank you for that. Now, I heard it wasn't the greatest likeness in the world, but I still kind of wish you hadn't painted it over. *[Laughter]*

I also got a souvenir from my stay here, and I want to show it to you. Thank you. And someone asked me if I would give this fellow a ride on Air Force One, to sort of add to the legend, you know? *[Laughter]* And I thought, why not? He looks more like me than that guy on the water tower did. I think I'll do that. *[Laughter]*

I do want to say I love the message that Faisal and Sachin gave about building on our common humanity, and I wrote down what I thought was the best line from Katy Beebe's talk, "Use clichés like they were meant to be used." I think that's pretty good, because we all have them. *[Laughter]* The truth is, I have been paying attention now to graduations for quite some time. And you are graduating at a time which is different. Yes, there are a lot of common elements in this ceremony. Yes, there are a lot of common elements in your feelings. Yes, you're a remarkably diverse group. I could tell that just by shaking hands with you and exchanging a few words. One of you even asked me to change a Government policy. *[Laughter]* Good job.